



## 1 INTRODUCTION

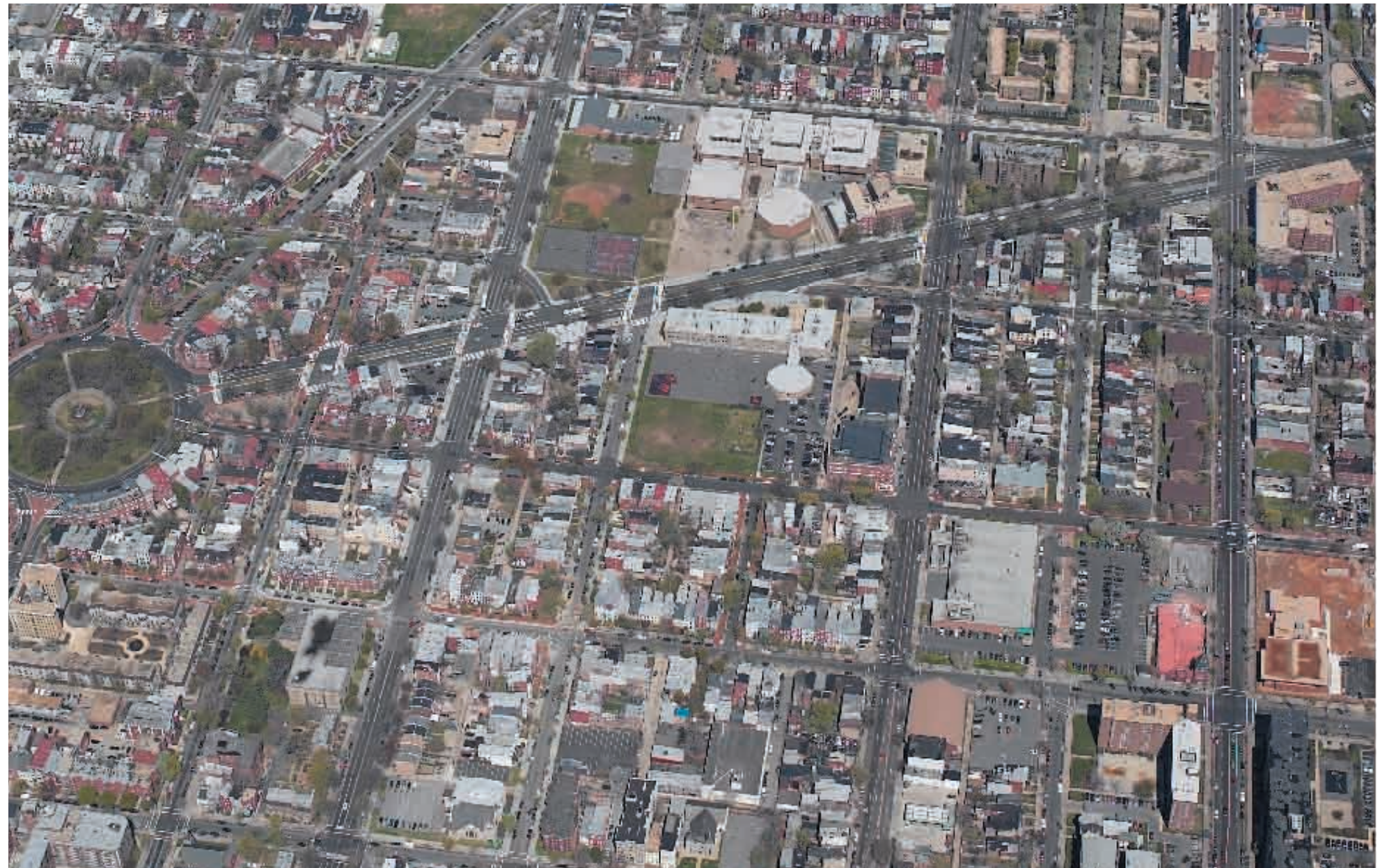
### Background

Located just north of the District's central business district and in the easternmost section of Ward 2, the neighborhoods located in the area around the new Convention Center are known for their diversity and urban character. In addition to being conveniently located within the District, the mix of housing types and number of affordable housing units has throughout the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century ensured that the area has retained its diversity. Today, this area is being rediscovered. With concerns about losing affordable housing, a desire to attract retail, and many demands placed on its public spaces, this study was initiated to develop a strategy for guiding new development so that it benefits existing residents as well as those that are new to the neighborhood, and to ensure that the District uses its resources as effectively as possible to address these issues.

Today, the Study Area is experiencing an influx of investment spurred, in part, by the construction of the new Washington Convention Center. Other factors contributing to recent investment are the areas proximity to downtown, good building stock, excellent accessibility to mass transit, and the regional real estate market. Many of the changes taking place in the neighborhood today are include private investment in renovating existing homes and businesses.

Private investment in the community is long over due and residents view on new development is varied. For some, the investment is seen as positive, bringing more residents to the neighborhood and increasing opportunities for much needed neighborhood serving retail. For others, the increased cost of housing and retail space and the decreasing number of affordable housing units bring concerns of displacement of long-time residents and local businesses.

Over the years, many studies and plans have been conducted for the area to address housing needs and economic development challenges. One of the plans, the Urban Renewal Plan for the Shaw School Urban Renewal Area, was adopted in 1969 and is still in affect. This



**Project Area** - The Study Area is located north of Washington's Central Business District and includes a mix of row houses, apartments, retail uses, and public facilities. It is bounded by New York Avenue, Massachusetts Avenue, 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Vermont Avenue, U Street, Florida Avenue, and New Jersey Avenue. The area is generally referred to as Shaw, but includes a number of neighborhoods identified by area residents. These include Logan Circle, French Street, Westminster Street, Blagden Alley, O Street Market, East Central, and Mount Vernon Square.





## CONVENTION CENTER AREA STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN



Urban renewal-era housing next to historic building

plan was developed during a time when municipalities first dealt with urban decline – the plan opted for more selective intervention in a community rather than wholesale demolition and reconstruction, a planning strategy that was used in the District's Southwest community. Much of the Convention Center area's affordable housing, as well as the neighborhood retail center at 7th and O streets, was built during this time and as part of the Urban Renewal Plan.

In another effort to control growth in the Study Area, two historic districts were created around the Convention Center - one to the east and one to the west - to mitigate the impact of new development on adjacent neighborhoods. Design review of buildings in this area has been in effect since the districts were established in 1999.

Completed in November 2000, the Downtown Action Agenda is one of the more recent plans calling for the strengthening and protection of the existing Shaw community. The



Giant Supermarket developed as part of the Urban Renewal Plan

Downtown Action Agenda, along with the completion of the Strategic Neighborhood Action Plans (SNAPs) for Clusters 7 and 8 in 2002, led to the funding and development of the Convention Center Area Strategic Development Plan. The three plans called for protecting affordable housing in the community and strengthening existing and new retail serving the community. Other plans for this project area, like the *Public Art Study for the Shaw, Blagden Alley/Naylor Court, and Mount Vernon Square Historic Districts and Area*, were developed to guide growth in the community, strengthen its character and appeal as a desirable neighborhood, and to address quality of life issues of existing residents and business owners.

### Plan Objectives

Building off of and reinforcing the goals of previous plans, the Convention Center Area Strategic Development Plan will help the District and community guide private and public investment to realize several key objectives:



Park at NJ Avenue and O Street built as part of the Urban Renewal Plan

- 1) Strengthen Neighborhood Businesses - Retain existing businesses and attracting new businesses in Shaw through capital investment, meet the needs of visitors and tourists, and create job opportunities and tax revenues for local services;
- 2) Generate Quality Housing - Preserve historic housing and create additional housing that will ensure the community remains demographically diverse and will continue to offer a wide range of housing types, and;
- 3) Improve the Public Realm - Determine the best use of public assets in the community; balance the need for pedestrian and vehicular movement; coordinate the activities of critical District agencies; and, create a streetscape environment that draws from the corridor's existing character and accommodates contemporary business requirements.





discussed the strengths and weaknesses of each alternative. Residents voiced a clear preference for the linear alternative.

In March 2004, the third public meeting focused on a preferred alternative for guiding neighborhood development. Residents reviewed specific recommendations for the neighborhood and provided feedback. Based on comments received at this meeting and at community meetings throughout the months of March and April, the preferred alternative was further modified.

The last public meeting, held in July 2004, provided participants the opportunity to comment on a refinement of the preferred plan, as well as design guidelines for new development. Comments received at this meeting were also incorporated into the final draft plan.

Throughout the planning process, the Office of Planning met with the District agencies who would be responsible for coordinating and implementing many of the Plan's proposed recommendations. Meetings were held with the following agencies:

- Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning & Economic Development
- Office of Property Management
- Department of Parks and Recreation
- District Department of Transportation
- District Department of Housing and Community Development
- DC Housing Authority
- DC Public Schools
- National Capital Revitalization Corporation

**Process**

The Convention Center Area Strategic Development Plan is the product of a collaborative effort between the District of Columbia government, area citizens and businesses organizations, neighborhood stakeholders, and a consultant planning and design team.

The Plan was developed through a participatory process that included four public workshops, as well as multiple meetings with community groups. The Office of Planning reviewed this documents recommendations directly with 23 different community groups and routinely briefed ten neighborhood organizations at their regular meetings. Notices of public meetings were announced at community meetings, advertised in community newsletters and newspapers, distributed on flyers hand delivered throughout the project area, and posted on E-mail lists. Community participation included residents, business owners and other stakeholders from all parts of the project area.

Four public meetings covered a range of topics and concluded with a development guide for the future of the neighborhood. The first meeting, held in October 2003, included an introduction of the consultant team and an overview of their initial observations of the area. This meeting also provided residents with an opportunity to share what they wanted to see happen in the neighborhood over the next ten years, their concerns about housing and building density, and support needed for local businesses.

The second public meeting was held in January of 2004. This meeting included a review of three conceptual plans describing how future development in the community could be guided. The three concepts included different alternatives for guiding retail and residential development in the project area. The most significant differences in the concepts were the location of retail, which defined the three alternatives as linear, nodal, or dispersed. At this meeting residents



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